

Maine State Planning Office

Waste Management & Recycling Program



Fact Sheet: Planning & Developing Your Recycling Education Program

Education is arguably the most important part of your recycling program. Because education is so crucial to your program's success, it is very important to carefully plan how to best communicate with your residents. Who will do the work? Who will hear the message? What strategies will you use? Such planning ensures that a wide variety of individuals in the community are reached regularly and systematically.

Develop a Plan

The first step in creating a successful educational campaign is to sit down and work out the details. The most important decision is who will be doing the work. It is crucial that there be at least one person who will be responsible for overseeing the recycling education. In many programs, a full-time recycling coordinator can oversee the education. In municipalities where the position does not exist, existing personnel, such as the solid waste manager, town planner or public works director may be able to assume the responsibility.

It is also important to appoint a volunteer recycling committee if one does not already exist. A volunteer committee, in addition to the designated education coordinator, will ensure sufficient support to conduct an effective educational campaign. A committee can also donate resources, such as artistic skills, provide a link with business and civic groups, and provide a cross section of opinions and ideas that will be representative of the community. Be sure to include volunteers who are willing to work hard and have enough committee members to avoid burnout.

The cost of developing and distributing educational materials will depend on the amount of donated services that can be obtained and the extent of your educational efforts. As a rough guideline, you should plan on allocating \$1 per household to the public promotion and education component of your recycling program.

Develop a Message

Educational efforts should be specific to your community's particular concerns. Use messages that most directly reflect the needs and values of your community. Use your educational materials to tell people: 1) why they should recycle, including the environmental, economic, and community benefits, and 2) how they should recycle, including all of the relevant details (what, where, and how) of the program. Educational promotion of the recycling program should be clear, concise and consistent.

Target Your Audience

The nature and type of promotional materials depends on who your audience is. Target the areas of your community that are critical to the success of your program. Audiences can be identified by where they

live, their type of residence, their membership in organizations, or their age. The following are common target groups: homeowners, apartment dwellers, school children, civic groups, consumers, employees, senior citizens, and tourists.

Select Your Educational Approaches

Based on your target audience, select the types of activities that will most effectively reach those people. For example, inserts in tax bills will more effectively reach senior citizens than they will apartment dwellers or tourists. Use pamphlets, flyers, surveys, slogans, newsletters, press releases, letters to the editor, weekly and/or monthly newspaper columns, press kits, direct mailings, special events, and curbside containers to reach different segments of your community.

Draw on local expertise. Solicit volunteers to develop graphics. Ask local print shops to donate a printing job. Seek contributions from local businesses for promotional materials. Take advantage of public service announcements through local newspapers, radio, and television.

See SPO's publication, **Getting the Message Out**, for more information on educational approaches.

Provide Feedback Throughout the Program

Feedback should be a very important part of your recycling education. Highlight the amounts of materials recovered, money saved, and successes of your program. Citizens like to hear when they are doing a good job and will be encouraged to do an even better job.

Evaluate Your Education Program

Review the effectiveness of your activities through surveys, tonnage reports, contamination levels, and citizen feedback. Is the message being received? Has participation increased? Are people confused? Do they need more or different information? Does the approach warrant the time and money being spent? Periodically update your plan based on your evaluation.

For more information, please contact:

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or visit us online at: **www.recyclemaine.com**

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